

Getting pulled over by a police officer can be a stressful and uncomfortable experience, especially if you have never been pulled over before. This brochure is designed to familiarize you with what to expect during a traffic stop from the Fairfax County Police.

The primary reasons for being pulled over are for your safety and the safety of others. Highway safety is a primary goal of the Fairfax County Police Department. Through driver education and enforcement, our mission is to keep your friends, your loved ones and you safe on our roadways.

The Fairfax County Police targets four traffic offenses that studies have shown cause the most collisions, injuries and fatalities. These offenses are

- **DUI (driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol);**
- **Aggressive Driving;**
- **Speeding;**
- **Not Wearing Seat Belts.**



While there are many other traffic violations, these four major areas significantly impact public safety.

Officers carry out the department's primary goal of providing a safe motoring environment for the public. They are responsible for enforcing traffic laws, investigating collisions and assisting motorists on the county roadways.

We hope this brochure will help you feel comfortable with the contact you have with the officer. Please remember that the number one goal is to make sure you and your loved ones are safe on the roadways.

What You Can Expect

- That the officer is courteous and professional and treats you in a respectful manner.
- That you will receive an explanation of why you were stopped.
- That your safety is ensured while in contact with the officer and that he or she will assist you in getting back on the roadway safely.
- If you are issued a summons, that it will be explained to you as well as your options for resolving it.

If You Are Stopped

As soon as you notice the emergency lights, safely pull your vehicle over to the shoulder and stop when it is safe.

- Although you might not know the reason, you should pull over right away.
- There may be some problem with your vehicle of which you are unaware.

Remain in your vehicle while the officer approaches.

- Do not attempt to get out of your vehicle or approach the officer.
- Exiting your vehicle does not assist the officer and may be perceived as a threat.
- For the officer's safety and yours, remain in your vehicle.

Turn on your interior light if stopped at night.

- A lit vehicle will reduce the officer's concern regarding weapons or other possible threats within your reach.

Keep your hands easily observable, preferably on the steering wheel where they can be easily seen by the approaching officer.

- Reaching under your seat or into your glove box are actions that will cause the officer concern that you may be reaching for a weapon.

Give your license and registration to the officer if asked to do so.

- Law requires a driver to turn over this information upon request by a uniformed officer or an officer in plain clothes who displays proper identification.
- He or she may not be stopping you for the same reason that you perceive.
- The officer usually does not have any previous knowledge of you.
- If the officer asks you to step out of your vehicle, do so without any sudden or threatening movements.
- Give the officer approximately 3-5 feet of 'personal' space as a safety zone to do his or her job.



- Remain in your vehicle at all times unless told to do otherwise.
- Do not become argumentative, disorderly or abusive. If you believe that you have been unfairly treated, DO NOT make that argument on the side of the road. Your best alternative is to carry your protest to traffic court.
- In some cases, officers may ask you for your consent to search your vehicle. You have the right to refuse a consent search.

Safety is Our concern; Don't be Offended

Most citizens already realize that law enforcement is a difficult and dangerous profession. Scores of police officers are killed each year, and hundreds more are injured and assaulted. For these reasons, police officers tend to be cautious. They place a great deal of emphasis on officer safety and survival. Certain safety practices are instilled in our officers from the first day of their careers.

Although the procedures maximize safety for the officer, they may seem standoffish, impolite or offensive to citizens who may not consider such precautions necessary with 'them'. Even though you have no intention of doing the officer harm, he or she will probably maintain a defensive posture until the officer feels that there is no risk of confrontation or injury. As far as police officers are concerned, there is no such thing as a 'routine' traffic stop. Every stop has the potential for danger.



Treating Citizens With Respect

Fairfax County Police officers, from day one, are trained in keeping our community safe and enhancing the quality of life for us all. They are taught to be respectful, professional and courteous in all education and enforcement stops.

If you feel an officer has acted inappropriately, we want to know. Please contact the Fairfax County Police Internal Affairs Bureau at 703-246-2793 and tell us of your concerns, or visit our complaints web page. You have the right to file a complaint through that office and we will follow up on it. Conversely, we would also welcome comments of a positive nature which can be submitted at our compliments web page.

A disagreement over the validity of a traffic infraction or criminal citation is not a complaint. Such disagreements should be directed to the proper court having jurisdiction in the matter.

The Fairfax County Police strives to provide the best law enforcement service available.

This pamphlet is intended as a guide only. Contact your nearest Fairfax County Police Station for any questions or interpretations. "Fairfax County is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination in all county programs, services and activities and will provide reasonable accommodations upon request. To request special accommodations call , Fairfax County Police, Commander of Personnel Resources Division 703-246-7562, 703 204-2264 or the Virginia Relay Center TTY 1-800-828-1120. Please allow seven working days in advance of the event in order to make the necessary arrangements." Alternate Languages may be available upon request.



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What to do if we stop you!



TRAFFIC STOPS

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE